

1 **The Presbytery of Coastal Carolina**
2 **Policy For Congregations Seeking To Separate From**
3 **The Presbyterian Church (USA)**

4 (Approved & adopted at the 6/18/09 Stated Presbytery Meeting)
5 (Edited 2/17/12 for conformity to *Book of Order* amendments)
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7 the PJC rulings known as “Tom” and “McGee”)
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13 **Introductory Comment**

14 *There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling,*
15 *one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all,*
16 *who is above all and through all and in all.” Ephesians 4:1-5*
17

18 This policy addresses the process by which the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina and its member
19 congregations face discernment regarding separation from the Presbyterian Church (USA). We have the
20 difficult challenge to honor the shared witness of faith in Jesus Christ, even amongst differences of
21 interpretation and practice. This policy strives to maintain integrity of denominational obligations of the
22 Presbyterian Church (USA) while recognizing that some congregations find it difficult to continue their
23 faithful witness to Jesus Christ as part of this denomination. Therefore, the policy intends to create a
24 gracious path for congregations to reaffirm their connection with the denomination or to proceed with
25 requesting dismissal from the denomination. The intent of the policy is to be a bridge, not a stumbling
26 block, and to be fair, not punitive.

27 Dwelling in a divided world, we realize that separation is painful but sometimes necessary and
28 healing. We pray that institutional separation does not destroy the unity of the greater church and our
29 participation in it as brothers and sisters of Christ. We trust that all who participate in this process will be
30 upheld in prayer through the strong and sure power of the Holy Spirit.

31 **I. Principles of Presbyterian Order**

- 32 A. “The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity” in the first part of the *Book of Order* are sufficient to
33 guide the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina in any crisis if
34 honored by all in the church including its officers and congregations. The Presbyterian Church
35 (USA), the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina, and its particular churches are members of the Body
36 of Christ. Faith-group affiliation does not alter such membership. Should a congregation, through
37 the action of its session, express a desire to separate from the Presbyterian Church (USA), the
38 Presbytery of Coastal Carolina under the guidance of the Holy Spirit shall maintain
39 communications and a relationship in service of Our Lord to the extent possible. The Presbytery
40 of Coastal Carolina does not intend to appeal to civil authorities to judge or decide its relationship
41 and responsibilities with its member churches.

42 “The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity,” Part One of the *Book of Order*, is the recommended
43 foundation for discussion.

44 Separation from the Presbyterian Church (USA) is a serious issue for the congregation and for the
45 Presbytery of Coastal Carolina. Even if a congregation is dismissed to another Reformed body, it
46 is the intent of the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina that the relationship not be permanently broken.

47 In an effort to enable a proper discussion during the process, the following topics in Part One of
48 the *Book of Order* are recommended for careful consideration.

- 49 1. **The Head of the Church.** All power in heaven and earth is given to Jesus Christ who calls
50 the church into being and who gives his church its faith and life, its unity and mission, its
51 officers and ordinances. (See F-1.02)
- 52 2. **The Great Ends of the Church.** The areas listed focus on the proper tasks and mission of a
53 Presbyterian Church. These are “the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of mankind;
54 the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine
55 worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the
56 exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.” (F-1.0304)
- 57 3. **The Historic Principles of Church Order.** The following are brief references to the
58 concepts in this section that may be subject matter for any discussion.
- 59 a. (F-3.0101a, b) “God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the
60 doctrines and commandments of Men...” “Therefore, we consider the rights of private
61 judgment, in all matters that respect religion, as universal and unalienable: We do not
62 even wish to see any religious constitution aided by civil power...”
- 63 b. (F-3.0104) “That truth is in order to goodness...” and its tendency is to promote holiness.
64 “And that no opinion can either be more pernicious or more absurd than that which
65 brings truth and falsehood upon a level, and represents it as of no consequence what a
66 man’s opinions are....we are persuaded there an inseparable connection between faith
67 and practice, truth and duty.”
- 68 c. (F-3.0105) “...we also believe that there are truths and forms with respect to which men
69 of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the duty of both
70 of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other.”
- 71 d. (F-3.0107) “That all Church power, whether exercised by the body in general or in the
72 way of representation by delegated authority, is only ministerial and declaration; that is to
73 say, that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners;...”
- 74 e. (F-3.0108) “Since ecclesiastical discipline must be purely moral or spiritual in its object
75 and not attended with any civil effects, it can derive no force whatever but from its own
76 justice, the approbation of an impartial public, and the countenance and blessing of the
77 great Head of the Church Universal.”

78 4. **The Principles of Presbyterian Government**

79 (F-3.02) “That the several different congregations of believers taken collectively constitute
80 one Church of Christ, called emphatically the Church;” All parts of the Church are to be
81 united and the majority shall govern with the minority having right of appeal but ultimately
82 decisions are to be made “...by the collected wisdom and united voice of the whole Church.
83 For these principles and this procedure, the example of the apostles and the practice of the
84 primitive Church are considered authority.”

85 5. **Historic Presbyterian Polity Regarding Property** Held in Trust as Expressed in the *Book of* 86 *Order*.

87 All property held by or for a congregation, a Presbytery, a synod, the General Assembly, or
88 the Presbyterian Church (USA), whether legal title is lodged in a corporation, a trustee or
89 trustees, or an unincorporated association, and whether the property is used in programs of a
90 congregation or of a higher council or retained for the production of income, is held in trust
91 nevertheless for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (USA). (G-4.0203). Because
92 the trust clause is a means of witness to our unity in the covenant of common mission, it is

93 incumbent upon the Presbytery to exercise forbearance, not coercion, to act graciously rather
94 than adversely to its member congregations in regard to its provisions. (See addendum.)

95 **II. Principles of Resolution**

96 In times of dispute over issues of conscience, the Presbytery will adhere to, and member churches are
97 encouraged to adhere to, these Principles of Resolution. Guided by our Presbyterian form of
98 government:

- 99 A. We affirm the mission of the Kingdom of God and not the maintenance of any particular
100 institution as our highest calling;
- 101 B. We believe that the local congregation is the primary mission unit of Presbytery, and that issues
102 of property and money are always secondary to people and mission;
- 103 C. We will not abdicate all decisions regarding property and finance to the local congregation;
- 104 D. We understand that property is maintained and administered locally by the congregation on
105 behalf of the denomination;
- 106 E. We maintain accountability and connection by shared, representative leadership and oversight;
- 107 F. We understand that regarding issues of conscience, “Divorce” can be a relevant analogy in
108 releasing congregations. Each side must confront difficult realities, confront what it perceives to
109 be a broken trust, speak of those realities to each other, and be forced to consider the ongoing
110 health and viability of the other;
- 111 G. While upholding the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA), we will not approach
112 property issues in such a way as to constrain local congregations in their ability to do mission and
113 ministry;
- 114 H. We may use Pastoral Teams and Negotiating Teams as described in Section IV below instead of
115 the use of an Administrative Commission, where appropriate;
- 116 I. We will encourage all presbyters and congregations to “concur with or passively submit to” (G-
117 6.0108(b), footnote 1, the old *Book of Order*) concerning the vote and wisdom of the majority of
118 the Presbytery. If their consciences will permit neither, the Presbytery will be generous in
119 allowing congregations and presbyters with strong issues of conscience to pursue peaceable
120 withdrawal, which will include dismissal to another Reformed body in accordance with the Trust
121 Clause (see addendum);
- 122 J. Throughout this process, teaching and ruling elders, in accordance with their ordination vows,
123 will “be governed by our church’s polity” and “abide by its discipline” (BOO W-4.4003 e);
- 124 K. The Presbytery, through the Pastoral Team, shall determine whether or not a viable continuing
125 congregation committed to remaining as a part of the Presbyterian Church (USA) exists which
126 may make use of the property, and if that should not be the case, what provisions have been made
127 for the care of congregation members who will continue their membership in the Presbyterian
128 Church (USA);
- 129 L. The intent of any dispute within the life of the church is to achieve reconciliation. The Presbytery
130 of Coastal Carolina wishes to make clear our intention to seek that goal. We assure any
131 congregation that should separate from us of our continuing prayers for them and willingness to
132 welcome them back to that part of God’s family known as the Presbyterian Church (USA).

133 **III. Principles of Negotiation**

134 The Presbytery, through the process of negotiating issues of conscience and property with
135 congregations, will act in such a manner that will reflect its primary concern for the ongoing mission
136 and vitality of Christian witness in the area impacted by ministry of that congregation. Therefore:

- 137 A. The Presbytery recognizes that “the church” in a particular area is not its building or financial
138 assets, but the people of the congregation;
- 139 B. The Presbytery must be mindful both of congregation members who, for reasons of conscience,
140 desire that their congregation be dismissed to another denomination, and also those congregation
141 members who wish to remain within the Presbyterian Church (USA);
- 142 C. The Presbytery must honor any legal restrictions or reversion clauses as well as historic covenants
143 on the property;
- 144 D. When there is a group that desires to remain within the Presbyterian Church (USA) and a group
145 that desires to be dismissed to another Reformed body, the goal of any negotiations is that both
146 congregations be as healthy as possible in the aftermath of separation;
- 147 E. Specific requirements for dismissal are listed in **Section IV. D.** below;
- 148 F. The financial settlement portion of a dismissal agreement between the Presbytery and a particular
149 church will be used to maintain or re-establish a mission of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in that
150 locale, for new church development elsewhere within the Presbytery, or for other mission work of
151 the Presbytery as directed by the Presbytery.

152 IV. **Processes for Resolution**

153 In the Presbyterian tradition, an inter-connected relationship is assumed between the Presbytery and
154 its congregations. Our process is meant to ensure that the congregation is fully informed on the issues
155 at hand, equipped with knowledge of this Presbytery’s process, as well as the processes and values
156 that have guided other congregations and presbyteries in their decision-making. Therefore, no
157 congregation will be dismissed to another Reformed body unless and until, at a minimum, the
158 following process is followed:

- 159 A. If after prayer and study, the Session and its pastor/moderator by a majority vote decide that they
160 have serious concerns about matters of conscience, they shall invite the Presbytery to form a
161 Pastoral Team in order to engage the congregation in discussions about potential resolution of the
162 issue(s) or dismissal of the congregation to another Reformed body.
- 163 B. If a church decides to leave the Presbyterian Church (USA) without involvement of the
164 Presbytery in the process, such action disregards the covenant relationship established by our
165 partnership in the gospel as members of the PCUSA.
- 166 C. When the leadership of the Presbytery becomes aware, either through formal session action or
167 discussion, or through informal contacts with congregational leaders or members, that a
168 significant number of members in a congregation are in serious disagreement with the
169 denomination to the extent of considering leaving the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Presbytery
170 may respond with any of the following actions:
 - 171 1. The Committee on Ministry may appoint a Pastoral Team to begin work with the session and
172 congregation in order to fulfill the covenantal intent established in the current guidelines for
173 mutual discernment;
 - 174 2. If the Presbytery determines that the actions taken by a session and congregation are in
175 serious violation of the covenantal intent of these guidelines, the Presbytery may appoint an
176 Administrative Commission to work with the session and congregation. The Administrative
177 Commission will be given powers in accordance with those authorized by the *Book of Order*
178 (G-3.0109.b.5, G-3.0303.e, D-3.0101.b). Specific approval of Presbytery is required before
179 the Administrative Commission dissolves a pastoral relationship. (*Book of Order*, G-
180 3.0109.b.5)
- 181 D. **The Pastoral Team:** Assignment of Members, and Preliminary Responsibilities with the Session.

- 182 1. The Pastoral Team will be appointed by the Committee on Ministry and specifically trained
183 by the Presbytery in their tasks.
- 184 2. The session will be required to submit an active membership roll to the Pastoral Team that is
185 based on the number of active members reported in the previous year's statistical report to the
186 General Assembly.
- 187 3. The Pastoral Team will meet with the session and pastor(s), with a member of the Pastoral
188 Team acting as moderator. The first action in that initial meeting will be to agree to the
189 Principles of Negotiation listed in **Section III** above.
- 190 4. The Pastoral Team and the session and the pastoral staff will be encouraged to seek ongoing
191 dialog in the hope of resolution.
- 192 5. The Pastoral Team will not determine the merits of the concerns raised by the session, but
193 will work to assure that before the issues are brought before the congregation, they have been
194 addressed fairly and accurately.
- 195 6. The Pastoral Team will promptly report the results of the initial meeting and its
196 recommendations to the Committee on Ministry through its Chairperson.
- 197 7. The Pastoral Team will hold a series of conversations with the session and with members of
198 the congregation in small group affording to all persons affected fair notice and an
199 opportunity to be heard. (*Book of Order*, G-3.0109)
- 200 8. The Pastoral Team will respond in written form and/or in a town hall gathering(s) to the
201 questions and issues raised in the small group conversations.
- 202 9. If the Pastoral Team discerns that a large majority of the congregation desires to seek
203 dismissal to another reformed body they shall ask the Mission Cabinet to appoint a
204 Negotiating Team, including as many members of the Pastoral Team as possible, to work out
205 terms for dismissal.
- 206 10. If representatives from other Reformed denominations are invited by the Session to address
207 the congregation, a representative from Presbytery shall be present as well, and shall be given
208 an opportunity to speak.

209 **E. The Negotiating Team**

- 210 1. The Negotiating Team will meet with representatives of the church appointed by the session
211 to discuss terms of dismissal.
- 212 2. In compliance with the latest decision of the Permanent Judicial Commission of the General
213 Assembly concerning the disposition of church property, a certified appraisal of the real
214 property (land and buildings) is required.
- 215 a. The church shall be responsible for the cost of the appraisal.
- 216 b. If the Presbytery determines that the church has received an appraisal for the real
217 property (land and buildings) that is unreasonably low, the Presbytery will also receive a
218 certified appraisal at cost to the Presbytery, and the average of the two appraisals will be
219 used to determine the property value.
- 220 c. An agreed-upon alternative between the Negotiating Team and the session may be sought
221 in order to establish a valid appraisal value of the property.
- 222 d. Any negotiation shall reflect the presbytery's desire for a gracious separation that
223 acknowledges the congregation's ministry and mission to the presbytery in the past and
224 seeks to bless and pray for the congregation's future ministry while also providing for the
225 future ministry of the presbytery.

- 226 e. Any loans or other financial obligations to the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina or any
227 Presbyterian Church (USA)-related group must be paid in full.
- 228 f. The name of a dismissed congregation may not be entirely identical to the name of the
229 former PCUSA congregation. New signage and all communications (e.g. website,
230 Facebook, brochures, newspaper information) must reflect the new name.
- 231 3. In accord with the *Book of Order* G-3.0107, all session and congregational minutes,
232 congregational registers, and any other ecclesiastical records of the congregation through the
233 date of dismissal from the PC(USA) shall be deposited with the Stated Clerk of the
234 Presbytery of Coastal Carolina. In lieu of original documents, copies of the documents may
235 be given to the Stated Clerk, who will transfer them to the Presbyterian Historical Society for
236 permanent safekeeping.
- 237 4. The ecclesiastical status of all members of the departing congregation who are currently
238 commissioned ruling elders, inquirers or candidates for ministry must be confirmed prior to
239 dismissal.
- 240 5. **Teaching Elders** (Ministers of Word and Sacrament) If a congregation is dismissed by the
241 Presbytery, one of the paramount concerns of this process is to ensure that the rights and
242 status of teaching elder members are considered and handled properly.
- 243 a. Teaching elders may request transfer to the Reformed body to which the congregation is
244 requesting dismissal. Transfers may be requested concurrently with the congregation's
245 request.
- 246 b. Transfers to another Reformed body will normally be approved, unless the teaching elder
247 member is the subject of any pending judicial or investigative action. Members under
248 discipline of the Presbytery may not be transferred until the administrative process is
249 complete and any required remedial actions completed. At that point the transfer may be
250 completed, but a record of the Investigative Committee or Permanent Judicial
251 Commission must be transmitted to the other body prior to the transfer being requested so
252 proper disclosure on any issue can occur.
- 253 c. If the pastor(s) currently serving the departing congregation do not wish to be dismissed
254 from the Presbyterian Church (USA), their relationship with the departing congregation
255 will be dissolved by the Presbytery upon dismissal of the congregation or at such a time
256 when the Committee on Ministry determines that the pastoral relationship is no longer
257 tenable, whichever comes first. Ordinarily the congregation will pay to the Presbytery, in
258 advance, the amount equal to six months of salary, housing, and Board of Pensions
259 benefits, which will be administered to the pastor(s) over the six months following the
260 dissolution of the pastoral relationship. If the pastor begins another position or retires
261 within these six months, the payments will end, and the remaining funds will be returned
262 to the church in a timely manner.
- 263 d. The presbytery shall vote separately on the dismissal of each teaching elder.
- 264 6. **Sessions** – The following items need to be considered by the Negotiating Team as they work
265 with sessions and congregations seeking dismissal to another Reformed Body.
- 266 a. The missional concerns of the Presbytery and the PC(USA) for ministry in the area.
- 267 b. The spiritual needs of members of the congregation (especially those who wish to remain
268 part of the PC(USA)).
- 269 c. A full assessment of the financial situation of the congregation including the possession
270 of sufficient resources to maintain the buildings, grounds and ministry. (This information
271 shall be shared with the Presbytery when it is asked to act on the dismissal of the
272 congregation.)

- 273 d. The covenantal nature of our life together as PC(USA).
274 e. Any special circumstances that might apply in this particular case.
275 f. Any dates for the completion of mutual obligations shall be spelled out in the final
276 agreement reached.
- 277 7. **Confirming the Congregation's Will** – At the conclusion of negotiations, it will be
278 necessary for the Presbytery to confirm the congregation's desire to be dismissed to the
279 specified Reformed body and upon the terms worked out with the session; to ascertain the
280 congregation's unity in that decision; and to ensure that the interests of those members
281 wishing to stay within the PC(USA) have been fully considered. The Presbytery will gauge
282 that validation through a consultative meeting and an "informational" vote of the
283 congregation. This is an integral part of the requirement for the Presbytery to consult with a
284 congregation in such matters (G-3.0301.a). At least two-thirds of the current active
285 membership shall attend the meeting in order for a vote to be taken. An affirmative vote of at
286 least 75 percent (75%) of those present and voting is required to concur in the Session's
287 request that the Presbytery dismiss the congregation to another Reformed body. This vote
288 shall be taken by secret ballot.
- 289 This validation meeting will be called by the Presbytery through the Pastoral Team and
290 members must be notified of the meeting at the congregation's expense at least two full
291 weeks before the meeting. The Presbytery (through the Pastoral Team) shall also arrange for
292 the moderator of such a meeting.
- 293 The following steps shall be observed in any congregational gathering:
- 294 a. Forty-five days prior to the congregational vote on the issue a list of the active members
295 of the church shall be provided to the Pastoral Committee.
- 296 b. Five days before the congregational vote, any changes to the active membership shall be
297 provided to the Pastoral Committee.
- 298 c. Whether or not a member voted to separate from the Presbyterian Church (USA) shall not
299 be recorded but each member voting shall sign a roll provided by the Pastoral Committee
300 for the sole purpose of verifying that only active members of the church voted.
- 301 d. Request for dismissal of the Presbyterian Church (USA) to an approved Reformed
302 denomination shall be voted on together with the terms arrived at through the negotiation
303 process. *No amendments to these terms is allowed.* In the case of a negative vote by the
304 congregation, continued dialogue will be sought.
- 305 8. The Presbytery, at a regular or specially called meeting, will vote on whether to accept the
306 terms of dismissal and to allow the congregation to be dismissed to a specified Reformed
307 body according to G-3.0303 b of the *Book of Order* of the Presbyterian Church (USA). *No*
308 *amendments shall be allowed to the terms as presented.* In the case of a negative vote of
309 Presbytery, continued dialogue will be sought.
- 310 9. If the Presbytery concurs with the request of the session and the will of the congregation as
311 expressed in the validation meeting (section 10 above) then the Moderator will lead the
312 Presbytery in a period of worship of Almighty God and thanksgiving for the witness and
313 ministry of the departing congregation. The departing congregation may also invite
314 representatives of the Presbytery to share in a service of worship organized by the
315 congregation.
- 316 10. Within 30 days of the Presbytery's vote approving dismissal of the congregation or members
317 thereof to another Reformed body, the Presbytery will prepare a letter to members of the
318 congregation informing them of their option to be dismissed with the congregation or to
319 remain in the Presbyterian Church (USA). The congregation will mail the letter to all active

320 members promptly and will bear all costs associated with this mailing. The letter will direct
321 that responses are to be returned to the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina. The Presbytery will
322 then ensure that contact is made with those members wishing to remain in the Presbyterian
323 Church (USA) and that they are assisted in joining a new congregation of their choice, if
324 there is to be no continuing Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation.

325 **V. Adoption of This Policy**

326 Since this policy specifies that the terms of dismissal are not open to amendment by either the
327 congregation or the Presbytery (see sections IV.D.10.d. and IV.D.11 above) when they meet to
328 approve them, this is a limit on the usual right of members to offer amendments. For that reason, this
329 policy must be adopted by a two-thirds majority of members present and voting at the Presbytery
330 meeting where this policy is presented.

331 **Addendum**

332 The Trust Clause reflects the church's organic unity as it fulfills "The Great Ends of the Church,"
333 strengthening its ability to guide its member congregations into their witness to the broader community.
334 "Unity is God's gift to the Church in Jesus Christ. Just as God is one God and Jesus Christ is our one
335 Savior, so the Church is one because it belongs to its one Lord, Jesus Christ." (F-1.0302a) We believe our
336 unity and our true connection comes from Christ, our Chief Cornerstone, and that our unity in Christ
337 serves as an essential basis for evangelism. (John 17:20-23) It is our prayer that we would all be one in
338 Christ, just as Christ and the Father are one.

339 Under the Trust Clause, a congregation's property, including land, buildings, and fixtures, is held in trust
340 for the Presbyterian Church (USA). Generally speaking, a congregation cannot sell, lease, or encumber
341 real property without the permission of Presbytery. A congregation may not take property with it to
342 another denomination unless Presbytery voluntarily releases its beneficial interest in the property. The
343 fact that a congregation may have exercised its limited right, created at the time of reunion, to be exempt
344 from the requirement of Presbytery approval of certain property transactions (G-4.0208) does not affect or
345 supersede the general polity of the church that all property of a congregation is held in trust, as set out
346 above, and does not create the right for a congregation to be dismissed from the Presbyterian Church
347 (USA) and retain its property.

- 348 1. The Trust Clause also reflects our understanding of the church as a communion of saints across time,
349 with responsibilities not only to those within the congregation today, but also to those who came
350 before and, maybe even more importantly, to those who will follow. When a congregation seeks to
351 leave the Presbytery, it is breaking what is often a significant historic relationship spanning centuries
352 in some instances; it is also departing from a fellowship in which its officers have freely and joyously
353 participated, by whose polity they all solemnly vowed to be governed (W-4.4000), and with which
354 many members may feel bonds of devotion and affection. This policy therefore cautions any
355 congregation seeking to separate from the Presbytery to consider its actions carefully.
- 356 2. The Trust Clause should not be used as a weapon to threaten civil action against a congregation. In
357 considering enforcement of the provisions of the Trust Clause, it is important that Presbytery and its
358 member congregations act with grace rather than as adversaries. Scripture calls us to seek in all
359 humility to resolve our disagreements and avoid the harm that is done to the Gospel and Christ's body
360 when Christians resort to civil litigation and public disputes over property.
- 361 3. The Trust Clause should not be used to bind congregations to the institution of the Presbyterian
362 Church (USA) if a congregation genuinely desires to depart over matters of conscience. At the same
363 time, matters of conscience may not be asserted to contradict or nullify the general, historic polity of
364 the Church that all property of a congregation is held in trust, as set out above.
- 365 4. Presbytery will not preemptively initiate civil litigation based on the Trust Clause. If a congregation
366 initiates civil action, the presbytery may take legal action to defend its mission strategy for the
367 presbytery and the interests of the whole Church.

368 5. Footnote – Principles of Resolution, I.

369 G-6.0108(b), footnote 1:

370 Very early in the history of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, even before the
371 General Assembly was established, the plan of reunion of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia
372 contained the following sentences: “That when any matter is determined by a major vote, every
373 member shall either actively concur with or passively submit to such determination; or if his con-
374 science permit him to do neither, he shall, after sufficient liberty modestly to reason and remonstrate,
375 peaceably withdraw from our communion without attempting to make any schism. Provided always
376 that this shall be understood to extend only to such determination as the body shall judge indispen-
377 sable in doctrine or Presbyterian government.” Historical Digest (P) p. 1310.) (*Plan of Union of 1758*,
378 paragraph II.)

379 [End of Policy]